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The Italian family, motherhood and Italianness in New Zealand. The case of the Italian community of Wellington

Introduction: migrant families and the Italian maternal archetype

Family migration has only recently attracted the attention of scholars of migration studies and mainstream family studies (Kofman, Kohli, Kraler, & Schmoll, 2011).

Following from feminist insights that challenged the sharp separation between public and private spheres as well as common assumptions about women's allegedly secondary role in economic migration, since the 1990s migrant families have been seen as 'an interface between the individual and the social world and between private and public spaces', and, thus, as capable of creating connections between sending and receiving societies (Kofman et al., 2011: 17). Recent studies (Baldassar, 2007; Baldassar & Merla, 2013; Evergeti, 2006; Zontini, 2007) have focused on the role of women and mothers, within transnational families, in negotiating family practices and the work of caring for and about the family, including maintaining kinship ties.

The family is widely recognised as being at the core of Italian society (Ginsborg, 1990, 2001), despite recent diversification of its forms (Saraceno, 2004). Close family ties are considered to be the distinguishing feature of Italian migrant communities *vis-à-vis* other ethnic migrant groups and the dominant, national groups of the receiving countries (Baldassar, 2011). From the Risorgimento¹ to the 1950s, religious and lay discourses have constructed Italian women as self-effacing, suffering yet resilient mothers, who produce children, care for them and teach them the highest moral, religious and patriotic values (Accati, 1998; Boneschi, 1998; D'Amelia, 1997). The resulting maternal archetype, combining power and

¹ Risorgimento ('resurgence') is the movement that between 1815 and 1860 led to the Unification of the different states of the Italian peninsula under the Kingdom of Italy.

powerlessness, has implications for mothering. Women have responded to their subordination by becoming agents of oppression and domination of their children, normally socialising daughters to accept gender norms, hence sanctioning their lack of agency, and sons to become excessively devoted to and dependent on them (Bravo, 1997). This psycho-social order has an inbuilt capacity to reproduce itself from generation to generation.

The ideal of the Italian mother as a being exclusively devoted to her family – a bourgeois ideal that already at inception clashed with the reality of peasant and working-class women's lives (Bravo, 1997; Gabaccia, 2003) – still permeates the Italian socio-cultural imagination. Today, despite intervening changes in women's material circumstances and symbolic position, Italian working women must still be perfect mothers and housewives. Care of home, children and the elderly is still assumed to be primarily their responsibility, even though, with access to higher education in the 1970s, women have entered the labour market in greater numbers, especially since the 1990s (Falcinelli & Magaraggia, 2013). In Italy, norms in matters of cleanliness, food preparation, appearance and sociability have remained largely unchanged: very high standards are internalised by both sexes and expected of women, whether single or married, employed or not. Middle-class women fulfil these expectations by outsourcing their domestic responsibilities, often employing migrant mothers who have left their children in their homeland. The persistence of traditional gender roles may have contributed to the phenomenon of *mammismo* ('mammism', from *mamma*, 'mum'), that lifelong, stifling mother-child attachment, especially between mother and son, which has recently attracted the interest of academics and the press.² Using as evidence the correspondence between prominent exiled patriots and soldiers and their forceful, publicly engaged mothers, D'Amelia (2005) traces the

² See the AHRC-funded Network '*La Mamma*: Interrogating a National Stereotype', Universities of Dundee and Glasgow (2012-2014).

mother-son bond back to the Risorgimento and the two World Wars. Loss through exile or death at war appears to be key to Italian mothers' overriding concern for sons (to the detriment of daughters). The consolidation of this concern during the 1950s and 1960s, when a primitive mother, whose quasi-animal instinct protects as well as oppresses and devours the (male) child, was superimposed onto the spiritual mother of Catholicism (D'Amelia, 2005), D'Amelia's study explains not only today's *mammismo*, but also the link between motherhood and national identity.

In instilling and preserving spiritual, moral and patriotic values in their children, mothers contribute to the process of nation building, now understood as taking place outside as much as within national boundaries (Baldassar & Gabaccia, 2011). The Italian migrant family plays a significant role in constructing and maintaining Italian identities, and the mother, as its pillar, is entrusted with reproducing and guarding 'Italian' morality, thus promoting a sense of ethnic belonging (Baldassar, 2011; De Tona, 2011; Ricatti, 2011). However, this process is not as straightforward as it seems. The pressure to abide by the myth of the self-sacrificing mother is often accompanied by an expectation to conform to social norms of the destination country which may clash with those of the community (Baldassar & Gabaccia, 2011; De Tona, 2011; Ricatti, 2011). More liberal lifestyles in the host country can be liberating for some migrant women (De Tona, 2004) or may create intergenerational conflict, especially with daughters, when mothers, who are responsible for regulating their daughters' sexuality, impose norms of behaviour that are outdated in the host country and sometimes also in the homeland. Motherhood may be a conflicted experience for recent, emancipated migrants who are expected to act like their mothers in order to respect the community's values. Pressure is compounded when the host country upholds, as in Ireland, more conservative values (De Tona, 2004).

These scenarios demonstrate that, if migrants take their own society's family organisation and 'idealized family morality' to their new country (McDonald, 2000:

433), these ideals, values and practices are by necessity put to the test when confronted with other cultures. It also becomes evident that Italian migrant mothers are not simply the keepers of an imagined national identity. They also, consciously or unconsciously, question and possibly revise the models imported from the homeland. This is borne out by recent research on Italian communities in the US (McKibben, 2011), Australia (Baldassar, 2011; Miller, 2011), Switzerland (Wessendorf, 2011) and Ireland (De Tona, 2004, 2011), underscoring the shift in Italian migration studies (and generally in migration studies) from a view of migrant mothers solely as passive, disempowered victims to an approach that brings to light agency, resistance and choice (Baldassar & Gabaccia, 2011; De Tona, 2011; Ricatti, 2011).

This article attempts to establish how the Italian ideals of family and motherhood have been translated to New Zealand, home to a less-known Italian diaspora often overshadowed by its giant neighbouring community of Australia. Since the Italians are only a minority in New Zealand, they have received little attention from academics and policy makers.³ Yet the country has seen an ongoing stream of Italian migrants since the 1870s. In the census of 5 March 2013, 3795 people identified themselves as Italian: of them 1239 were born in Italy and 741 lived in the Wellington region.⁴ The Island Bay community in Wellington has been selected for this ethnographic study for its relative compactness. This article, based on 50 interviews with members of this community, consists of three main sections. The next one describes the sample and the methodology. The following one, devoted to the findings, is organised in four subsections focusing on recurrent themes which provide strong evidence of the link between mothering practices and the informants'

³ Spoonley & Bedford (2012: 71) mention them only briefly. Recent publications are Hill (2011) and Elenio (2012) (orig. 1995)

⁴ See http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24670&tabname=Keyfacts (last accessed 30 March 2015).

self-perceptions as Italians and performance of Italianness: food and family, women's work and gender roles, raising sons and daughters and the regulations of daughters, living-at-home children and intergenerational relations. The final section examines these aspects against the ideals, ideologies, practices and policies current in Italy and New Zealand, to assess whether and how the community has departed from the Italian models, the influence of the host country and the impact of these factors on their sense of Italianness. The contribution of this study to an understanding of Italian, and generally, migrant motherhood is in the area of maternal agency and choice. It emerges that Italian women in New Zealand have always practised motherhood in a responsible, balanced, creative and progressive way. The earlier generations were able to compromise with and adapt to the values and practices of the host community in a sensible and practical way, in order to maintain control over their children and preserve the Italian ideals and morality, yet without denying them opportunities (including their daughters). The following generations have increasingly selected and adopted practices and ideals of the host country to replace the more persistently conservative Italian ones, while still benefitting from and focusing on the deeper ideals and more valuable aspects of Italian culture. Thus, they demonstrate greater agency and capacity to shape their own lives and well-being than their contemporary counterparts in Italy where legislation, policies and attitudes to work, domestic responsibilities and parenting still prevent them from developing their own ways to be mothers and in some cases even from becoming mothers.

The Italian community of Island Bay

The research presented in this article is part of a wider project on Italian, New Zealand and European identity constructions among the Italians in New Zealand.

Data were collected in four main locations between February and June 2013, in the

form of semi-structured qualitative interviews with 170 Italians and Māori-Italians of various generations. The 50 interviews selected for this article were collected in Wellington between February and April 2013. My interviewees, 9 of whom were Māori-Italians, had migrated or descended from Italians who had migrated to New Zealand for economic reasons between the 1870s and the 1970s.⁵ The Wellington district of Island Bay, which Italian fishermen started to settle in the 1920s (Elenio, 2012), hosts an Italian community going back four generations, the result primarily of chain migration from two Southern locations, the Aeolian island of Stromboli, north of Sicily, and the village of Massa Lubrense (near Sorrento) in the Bay of Naples. Not all interviewees lived in Island Bay and a few were from Northern areas, but they have been included because they may participate in such community events as the monthly Mass in Italian or the annual *fiesta*, may be members of Club Garibaldi or *Circolo Italiano* (Italian circle), or feel a symbolic connection with the community. My fieldwork also included participant observation at some of these events. The data collected offers a wide cross-section of this historical community, providing the viewpoints and self-perceptions of different generations, in some cases within one family.

The sample consists of 25 women and 25 men, of whom 9 were first generation, 20 second generation (this includes 1 born in Italy who migrated as a child), 15 third generation (including 2 born of one Italian parent and one second-generation parent) and 6 fourth generation. Their ages ranged between early twenties and early eighties, with no correlation between age, migration generation and period of migration. Most interviews took place in the interviewees' own homes or at a relative's. 41 of them were conducted in English because the interviewees

⁵ Highly educated or highly skilled migrants who have arrived in New Zealand since the 1980s looking for alternative lifestyles and/or better professional opportunities represent an entirely different case study and have not been included (except for one reference useful for a comparison with contemporary Italy).

had limited knowledge of Italian or lacked confidence. With the remaining 9 interviewees, all first generationers and able to speak English, Italian was the natural choice, given that I am an Italian native speaker. Most second-generation informants were brought up speaking Neapolitan, but they did not speak it with me, even though I told them I was fluent (dialect is the informal language of family interaction).

Since the wider project was about the intersection of multiple identifications, the questionnaire was devised to elicit three elements that conceptualise identity, as suggested by Erikson (1966): self-definitional (I am Italian...), self-descriptive (being Italian means...) and evaluative (I feel proud of being Italian...). The interviewees were asked to name three things that they associated with Italy, what it meant for them to be Italian and what Italian values they thought they embodied or subscribed to. The same questions were repeated for their New Zealand and, where relevant, Māori identities. When asked which identity was more dominant, as expected, the 'strength' of their Italian identification decreased from generation to generation, yet most of them reported that they had a significant 'Italian part': this expressed itself in such practices and areas as food rituals and family ties or in their will and effort to reconnect with their Italian heritage by attending cultural events and taking Italian language courses.⁶ Further questions were aimed at identifying change in family organization across generations. They were asked whether they thought they had been brought up and/or had raised their children according to an Italian, Māori or New Zealand style of parenting and what that meant for them, and, finally, to describe gender roles within their family of origin and family of destination. The answers yielded a very rich range of data.

⁶ I also asked whether they had indicated Italian as an additional ethnicity to 'New Zealand European' in the very recent census. Some could not remember, others claimed it was not possible to do so (it was possible). Therefore, the census figure of 3795 may not reflect the reality of Italian identifications.

Before analysing these data, I ought to clarify my position as a researcher. I am a Southern Italian who has lived in Britain for many years and who also lived in New Zealand for about three years in the late 1980s. My origins and my own migrations helped me to forge a relationship of trust with my interviewees, to gain better insight into their stories and to identify with some of their experiences. I became aware that I was also gaining insight into my own life and that the project was turning into a double homecoming: to Italy by way of New Zealand. I was careful not to direct their answers during the interviews and not to let my views affect my interpretation of the data. I have thus paid particular attention to the diversity of their self-perceptions, opinions and experiences. This was particularly important with such a heterogeneous sample. While my aim is to identify some general trends, in presenting my data I shall emphasise relevant differences in generation, age at the time of interview, family background and social status, gender, education and occupations, in an effort to respect and preserve these diversities.

Motherhood and the Italian heritage

Family and food: 'I am Italian, therefore I eat!'⁷

On the opening page of his history of the Italian migration to the Wellington region, Elenio (2012: 7), a second-generation Italian from Island Bay, observes that the extended family 'has traditionally been the basis of Italian society' to underscore how harrowing the experience of migration must have been for Italian migrants and for those they left behind and to explain why the history of the community centres around families. 40 interviewees talked about family as the distinguishing mark of the Italians within New Zealand society. The remaining 10 who did not mention 'family' talked at length about parents, grandparents and children, marriage and food. 46

⁷ Hardwick (2013: 8).

interviewees listed food among the three things they associate with Italy or as one of their most important Italian everyday practices, acting as the focus of family life and gatherings and functioning as the foremost intergenerational connection. The 4 who did not mention food welcomed me with coffee and cakes. A third-generation mother of a small child reflects on the linkage between parenting and upbringing, food, family, tradition and modernity:

[When I think of Italy] I think of respect for family, older people and children. I remember as a child having lots of generations of people together. I think that is something Italian and European... Food as well, traditional food, sharing meals, celebrations and traditions. I think of the old ways of doing things really [...] I don't know [how I will raise my daughter]. I think I'm a modern mother. When I think of Italian parenting I don't expect it to be very modern. I will teach [her] the traditions of my family, respect for people, especially older people, which I think may be Italian. [...] I don't want her to stay at home until she gets married.

Families have regular weekly or monthly get-togethers attended by all children and spouses or partners. The emphasis is on maintaining family ties and the enjoyment, reproduction and preservation of Italian recipes. All 9 Māori-Italians talked about overlaps between their two heritages, which place similar importance on family united by/around food. Two interviewees observed that, although the family-food association is a human need and a need and practice of all migrant communities, food and family are the main tools for the Italians to preserve and transmit Italianness to the new generations. While this implicates women directly because they are still the main providers of nurture, males also saw themselves as contributing to maintaining Italianness and disseminating Italian culture by growing tomatoes (from seeds brought from Italy by parents and grandparents) and importing and trading Italian produce. A recent book, centred on one family but produced with the participation of other community members, connects recipes and generations, revealing the transformation of the economic, educational and labour profiles of the community, alongside their unflinching commitment to passing on food rituals and

regional and national foods: 'a book packed with fond memories of struggle, survival and prosperity and a number of outstanding recipes' (Elenio, 2013: 4).

Women's work and gender roles

5 out of my 7 female interviewees in their seventies and eighties had done paid work. Except for 1 fourth-generation single woman who had secondary education, they had only been educated to primary level. Their life course presents a complex and discontinuous work pattern, with occupations often drawing on homemaking skills. A second-generation seventy-three-year-old reported that she had worked part-time as a dressmaker, had two spells in a hosiery factory interrupted by a six-month visit to Italy and the arrival of the children, had worked in a dairy, in her husband's fish-and-chip shop and in two old people's homes as a cleaner and a cook for two stints of eleven and nine years. At the same time she looked after her old mother who lived next door. This work pattern seems to be in line with the New Zealand national trends of post-war participation in the labour force for women of her age and education (Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Baxendine, 2005).

Women of later generations, who have benefitted from better education and more women- and family-friendly employment laws and policies and from public childcare, had been able to maintain more continuous employment than their unskilled and low-skilled mothers and grandmothers, with consequences for their roles as mothers. Of the 17 working-age women, 13 had degrees. Of these, only 1 had decided to stop working when the children arrived. The others were in professions or ran their own businesses. 3 worked reduced hours. 18 of the 25 women and 19 of the 25 men had children, all within marriage except for two younger women, one of whom was engaged to be married.

As expected, gender roles were traditional among the older generations. Women looked after the house and cared for the children and the elderly, while also

259 doing paid work. Male and female interviewees in their fifties and younger reported
 260 that in their own families roles were more fluid and husband and wife shared the
 261 domestic responsibilities. A second-generation woman in her late seventies, who
 262 stopped working after she had children, draws attention to the enduring influence of
 263 the Italian upbringing:

264
 265 I think [I brought up my children] more the Italian way. The New Zealand way is
 266 different. [...] Children at a certain age go flatting. The Italian ones don't do that very
 267 often, the odd one does. When they go flatting, they live with friends, they get up to
 268 more mischief. [...] The Italian way, men are spoilt by their mothers and then when
 269 they marry it goes on to the wife. [The husband] is always spoilt. I have noticed now
 270 that my boys when they were at home they didn't touch a thing, but once they
 271 married they do everything. [...] One son is married to an Italian who was born here
 272 [...] She does everything, he doesn't do anything, she helped the children with
 273 homework, she'd look after the garden and she goes to work, does lots of cooking
 274 [...] the wife of my other son [...] was born here [of a different European descent] but
 275 she's got different ideas. She's brought up the children to be very independent. They
 276 can all get on if nobody's home, they can do their own thing. They are completely
 277 different.

278
 279
 280 Her daughter, a graduate working full time, said that, when she was young, she
 281 helped in the house while her brothers did not. Being female was compounded by
 282 being the eldest, unmarried and living with her parents, which meant 'there was more
 283 leaning' on her. The son married to a second-generation Italian, a graduate who
 284 worked reduced hours, saw his contribution to the running of his own family in a
 285 slightly different way from his mother:

286
 287 I don't necessarily think that [mothers looking after the family] was an Italian thing. It
 288 was the time for the woman to stay at home [...] But certainly growing up in that
 289 environment, we weren't encouraged to make our bed, or do the ironing or look after
 290 ourselves in any way. Mum would make school lunches, would make us breakfast in
 291 the morning, which I don't think was probably normal in a Kiwi household. [...] In my
 292 own family, certainly [roles] have watered down. I still don't know how to iron but I
 293 still help. I have no problem to do the dishes, to cook, to do the vacuum cleaning, but
 294 not very often. I cook often and do the dishes often, the other roles I don't have an
 295 aversion to do them. But I'm not necessarily in the right place at the right time.

296
 297 There were, however, subtle differences between families, beyond generation
 298 and period of arrival, which indicate individual adaptation to environment, living

conditions and job demands. One second-generation man in his late fifties reported that 'mum and dad were generally very traditional', yet 'my father was not a person to arrive and sit down and wait for the meal. [...] It was unusual but he did help'. This contrasted with contemporary attitudes of his family in Italy, who, during his first visit, 'were amazed when I got up after my first meal to put my plate in the sink'. His wife, a fifty-five-year-old second-generation school administrator from a family of Italian 'gardeners' (growers of agricultural produce), also stressed changes in upbringing and gender roles between her parents and her own more liberal generation and the differences with the homeland and other ethnic groups. However, she also revealed continuities in traditions, when she reported that the demands of her husband's profession meant that he had not contributed to housework until his very recent retirement:

I was not allowed to go out with boys. [They were] very strict, I'm the oldest. Mum was a good Catholic, my brothers had more freedom, my sister probably as well [...] I would have liked to bring my own children up the Italian way but I had to give in. I tell them what I think is right, but [there was] peer pressure... We did our best, it was probably a compromise. My daughter is a good cook and likes cooking Italian food, [my son] too is very Italian. [...] Dad didn't let ladies pick tomatoes, but mum did the packing. Women worked but also looked after the family. In my family, it has changed a lot because my husband had a very big job, he's now more at home, so now we share. He's very good, not like a typical Italian. He can cook. Our Croatian friend... the men don't go anywhere near the kitchen. My dad now helps mum and washes the floor, she has new knees. When my brother was in Italy he wanted to do the dishes and they said no.

A second-generation seventy-one-year-old man confirmed that more liberal attitudes to housework and childcare did not yield a real sharing of chores when men had demanding positions:

My parents were very traditional. My mother was at home with the children. In my own family, my wife worked. I would say that in the beginning we had the more traditional roles, but it is much more shared now. I was involved in corporate life, a lot of work [...] something I regretted. I've articulated it to my children, I would have spent more time [with them].

Intermarriages, which are common today, bring by necessity change in gender roles. A third-generation man in his early thirties married to a non-Italian stated: 'My parents had a traditional division of labour. In my own family we both work and both share the household chores. I'm happy with that, I don't want to burden [my wife] with all the household chores. I would take an active part in rearing my children'. Food preparation is the area where male interviewees of different ages and migration generations were, expectedly, more involved, especially when the wife or partner was not Italian.

The persistence of traditional domestic arrangements on Italian soil was noted also by two recent migrants, a married couple of skilled professionals in their early thirties in Wellington since 2005, for whom sharing housework is an accepted notion and practice. To help new arrivals to settle (and to help their budget), they take in Italian lodgers: the wife reported that they only take unattached females, because Italian males do no housework, 'probably because they have been brought up by Italian mothers'. Her assessment of gender roles in contemporary Italy is confirmed, with reference to more complex scenarios, by sociological research (Anxo, Mencarini, Pailhé, Solaz, Tanturri, & Flood, 2011; Falcinelli & Magaraggia, 2013; Pacelli, Pasqua, & Villosio, 2013; Saraceno, 2000). This research is examined and compared with research on New Zealand in the final section of this article, to better tease out the ideals and realities of the lives of New Zealand mothers of Italian descent. Before doing that, we must add more elements to the picture of the Italian family organisation and parenting.

Raising sons and daughters and the regulation of daughters

Most interviewees said that they tried to raise their children in the way they had been raised: 'the Italian way'. The younger generations confirmed that they had been brought up with values of respect or obedience for family, the elderly and tradition

which they identify as 'Italian'. Parents spoke, spontaneously or prodded by myself, about the difference in the way they brought up sons and daughters. Different degrees and kinds of protectiveness emerged. While for sons it was directed at physical health and safety (in sport, for example), for daughters it concerned morality. Mothers of earlier generations said they were strict with their daughters. A seventy-five-year old second-generation man confirmed that this attitude was widespread: 'There were no sisters [in our family], we were very aware of the no-go area with Italian girls. [Upbringing was] strict for the girls, we were given complete freedom'. Positioning herself as both daughter and mother, a seventy-three-year-old second-generation woman brought to light interesting ambiguities, when she recognised how she had been disadvantaged by her strict upbringing and, as a result, although her duty and goal were still to turn her daughter into a good wife and mother, she gave her the same opportunities as her sons:

I brought up my children in the Italian way. But they have lost it all when they got married. [...] I was very strict with my daughter. She wasn't allowed to go out, to go on holiday with any friends. When you leave home, it will be when you get married. I was very protective of her, more lenient with the boys. [She had the] same education as the boys. She didn't want to go to Uni, the boys did. When I was brought up I always wanted to be a hostess. No! I had to learn how to cook, sew, be a good housewife. I wasn't that bad with my daughter. She is still a good cook, a good mother and a good wife. She used to complain that if she couldn't go out she would never get married. She had plenty of boys after her. Her daughter is only three, she is very protective of her now [...] I was brought up more strictly by my family than I have brought up my daughter.

Another woman of the same age and generation had a different experience, reporting that, although her father was very strict, 'I was allowed out, I didn't have to have a person accompany me. My mother left me free to make my own decisions'. This also contrasts with the experience of younger women born much later.

A strict regulation of daughters was still common in the 1960s and 1970s.

393 A thirty-four-year-old fourth-generation spoke of how her father's hippie life style
 394 was contradicted by his behaviour as a parent. In her case, it was the father that
 395 enforced Italian morality, in the absence of an Italian mother:

396
 397 I grew up in the counter culture of the '70s. My parents were hippies. They separated
 398 when I was about six. My father [...] still had a dominating male way. Myself and my
 399 sister had some huge fights in our teenage years about him being protective over us.
 400 He acted all relaxed, he was this crazy hippie dad, but when it came to teenage
 401 years the Italian head of the family really came out. [...] He would erupt in a fiery
 402 protectiveness if he thought we were dating boys. My [non-Italian] friends didn't feel
 403 that male protectiveness.
 404

405 Here are two second-generation women in their forties, whose parents migrated as
 406 late as 1962 and 1966 and whose experience as daughters made them determined
 407 to bring up their children differently:

408
 409 I was brought up according to the Italian style of parenting. My mother was over
 410 protective. I was not encouraged to play sport. It's very kiwi to play lots of sport, Italy
 411 is the opposite. For my own children I've chosen the areas [of Italian tradition] I think
 412 are important and used my discretion. I selected the good things, like food, family,
 413 communication, and I encourage things like sport and independence. Also for my
 414 daughter.
 415

416 I was raised quite strictly, couldn't go out, or have boyfriends. Not a lot of
 417 communication about why. No discussion. Just shut down, closed book [...]. My
 418 brother was treated differently. [...] I'm not sure if my sister and I broke the mould,
 419 but when he came along he was given a free rein. I am trying not to follow the same
 420 route with my own children. I know that in a boy's life the father is the most important
 421 role model, and for a girl the mother. We talk about everything [...] anything to do
 422 with sex, any questions they have, we are open about everything.
 423

424 Other female interviewees mentioned that they were brought up more strictly than
 425 their younger brothers and sisters, probably because with the passing of time first-
 426 generation parents were less able to resist, or became accustomed to, the more
 427 liberal New Zealand context.

428 Intermarriages seem to be an area of potential intergenerational conflict which
 429 affected daughters more than sons, the norm being for the daughters of earlier
 430 migrants to marry men from Italy or of Italian descent. Here are the experiences of

431 three women who were born respectively in the late 1910s (second generation,
 432 reported by her granddaughter), 1940s (second generation) and 1950s (third
 433 generation):

434 My grandmother married an Englishman [...] The fact she lived in Berhampore, the
 435 suburb next to Island Bay, was symbolic. She thought she wasn't quite accepted
 436 because she married out [...] I knew a lot of the Italians in the community but found it
 437 difficult to piece who was related to who, and me. [...] they might visit *nonna* [granny],
 438 we were slightly on the outside. *Nonna* thought it was because she didn't marry an
 439 Italian.

440

441 Interviewee: My dad wasn't too bad but my mum was. She would never ever have let
 442 me marry a Pakeha.⁸

443 Interviewer: And if you had fallen in love with one?

444 Interviewee: There would probably have been a big fight. There was a boy. My two
 445 brothers, one married an English woman. My sister married an Italian too.

446 Interviewer: Were you drawn to Italians because of your background, or was it
 447 convenient because of your parents?

448 Interviewee: Probably both, to keep the peace. I was attracted to my husband [...].
 449 He was handsome when I met him. We've been married fifty-three years now.

450

451 When I told [my mother] I wanted to marry, I was eighteen and pregnant, it was
 452 terrible, the very first thing my mother said to me is what is your *nonna* going to say
 453 because you are marrying a Māori. My parents were very upset. You can't imagine
 454 what it was like then in the 1960s. Young people of this generation can't imagine [...]
 455 When [my mother] wanted to marry my father, her father was hysterical because she
 456 wanted to marry a New Zealander and not an Italian. My father's family were going
 457 crazy because he was marrying an Italian not a New Zealander. My husband's family
 458 were not that keen on him marrying a non-Māori either.

459

460 Some first-generation interviewees spoke of their wish for their children to marry
 461 Italians, yet they had to accept their choices. The previous testimonies make evident
 462 the negotiation of Italian practices that went on in women's lives, both as daughters
 463 (was the choice of an Italian husband determined by desire or necessity to comply
 464 with parental expectations?) and as mothers (combining a strict upbringing of
 465 daughters with educational opportunities).

466 Education and work differentiate not only earlier female generations from later
 467 ones, but also sons from daughters. First-generation women did paid work probably

⁸ A New Zealander of British descent.

out of necessity. The younger ones work by choice: while their upbringing reflected their parents' ideas of womanhood and motherhood imported from Italy, their parents did not oppose their education and careers. Among earlier second generations, it was often reported that sons went to university while daughters, of their own choice or inclination, stopped at high school. This apparently free choice may have been the result of Italian socialisation or of the wider situation of women in New Zealand. A fourth-generation single woman in her seventies, who moved away from the family, spoke of the difficulties she encountered as a career woman in 1960s male-dominated Wellington. Today daughters obtain the same level of education as sons. Children are socialised much more equally and their parents aim to turn them into autonomous and capable adults independently of gender.

Living-at-home children and intergenerational relations

As in Italy, children of Italian families at Island Bay tend to live with the parents until they get married (my sample included only 2 unmarried cohabiting interviewees, one of whom was due to marry). The older generations acknowledged that their children were exposed to a wider context operating according to different values and practices. A first-generation seventy-three-year-old woman mentioned that compromise in other areas, such as allowing her daughters to go out, was crucial to prevent them from moving out. Some of them expressed sadness for the fact that their children were bringing up their own children in a 'more New Zealand way'. The practice of children living at home was raised by a number of parents and offspring of both genders, in relation to the different family practices and intergenerational bonds among New Zealanders. Here is a fifty-year-old second-generation father:

I would love my children to live here until they are fifty years old. It is a ridiculous thing to say, but to me it wouldn't be a bad thing. Whereas the Kiwi person would like to see them gone at sixteen. Even though I have been born and raised here, I can't see [...] I would want them to hurry up to get a job and move out. Unless they were

497 obnoxious people and you don't want them around, why would I want them to
 498 move out?

499
 500 One interviewee mentioned *mammismo* and the potential for the Italian family to be
 501 oppressive, particularly to young men, stressing differences with the homeland: 'The
 502 relationships between mama and the son appears much closer in Italy than in New
 503 Zealand families [...] young men of Italian descent in New Zealand have more
 504 independence than in Italy'.

505 My sample included only one interviewee who had left the parental home
 506 before marrying. His mother, in the early eighties, deplored his choice but indicated
 507 that they could not stop him. In his late forties and now divorced, he reported that he
 508 had moved out at twenty-three because he wanted to distance himself from a
 509 community which was stuck in the 1950s and 1960s, while both Italy and New
 510 Zealand were changing: 'A lot of the young people were not thinking for themselves,
 511 still influenced by parents that were stuck in another time. I wanted to move on'.
 512 Interestingly, although he rejected many of the Italian beliefs such as the sanctity of
 513 marriage, he endorsed the family as an institution 'that I do personally value'. He
 514 reported that his moving out had not caused conflict with his parents.

515 My younger interviewees did not mention that they had been constrained in
 516 their choices of where to live. Those who still lived at home seemed to do so out of
 517 choice. They describe very good relationships with their parents. Here is a third-
 518 generation female professional aged mid-to late twenties, the daughter of
 519 professional parents, who still lives with her parents and her adult brother, also a
 520 professional: 'Our family life is quite Italian. Coming home to your parents' house
 521 which my friends think is the worst thing in the world, I like it. I have a friendship with
 522 my parents'. The material comfort and emotional support offered by enlightened,
 523 educated and affluent parents should not be underestimated when considering the
 524 choice of these young people to live at home today, in comparison with the socio-

economic status of first-generation migrants in the 1960s and 1970s which would have been the familial context of the interviewee who had moved out. Yet, the practice of staying at home, in the past as today, is undoubtedly the result of cultural factors. This contrasts with the trend in the homeland where 'structural constraints', such as 'high employment, low entry salaries, lack of state support and barriers to entering the housing market' (Anxo et al., 2011: 163), alongside the attraction of the benefits of mothers' and sisters' domestic labour for the males (Saraceno, 2000), are major deterrents to children moving out. In Italy, traditional gender roles and males' dependence on women are thus perpetuated and cultural factors reinforced.

Respect and admiration for parents, grandparents, older relatives and ancestors were expressed by all generations. Similarly, parents were generally happy with the way their children's lives had turned out. However, a number of interviewees indicated that an Italian upbringing could also be a burden and intergenerational relationships may not have always been easy. The daughter of the hippie yet overprotective, fiery father spoke of 'emotional intensity' turning into conflict:

We have managed quite well but [...] my father mov[ed] away because he found his family overbearing. My other uncle also moved away because he found it overbearing, too much. Family is great, my father is a real pillar of our family [...]. His family, for him, was a bit [...] too intense.

Conflict with mothers was not reported by daughters, even while, on the basis of the testimonies reported in this section and the sample composition, mother-daughter relations might have been expected to be problematic, as for example in Ireland (De Tona, 2011) or Australia (Miller, 2011). 4 of my 25 female interviewees were born and raised in Italy, 6 had mothers born and raised in Italy, and 12 had adult daughters. Except for one third-generation woman who resented her mother for not providing the love and care expected of an Italian mother, daughters seemed to

take their mothers' and their own position in the family as part and parcel of their Italian identity. Nevertheless, as already seen, older women had to negotiate inherited expectations and did so instinctively. The younger generations engage with them in a more conscious and strategic way, though not without difficulty, as in the case of a Māori-Italian young woman. Brought up between the two countries, she had to steer her way through the outdated gender norms of her father's Italian village, while now, living in New Zealand, she must negotiate life with him and his contradictory injunctions for her to become a smart career woman and a good homemaker (for him).

Conclusion: Motherhood between Italy and New Zealand

The practice of motherhood among the Island Bay Italians exhibits areas of overlap with and departure from practices in Italy dependent on factors relating to both homeland and host country. Whether they came from the North or the South and even though they may represent diverse Italian family traditions and patterns of family formations in belonging to different migration generations (Miller, 2004), Italian migrants brought with them similar values and a way of life centred around family and church which they tried to reproduce in Wellington. This meant bringing up their children in the way they had been brought up. Far from Italy, without today's means of communication, Italian women 'missed the strong support of mothers and the extended family as they settled in and had children. For them learning to manage a family and a household budget, enforcing discipline and order came largely from instinct and the experiences of their own upbringing rather than the advice and direction provided by older people' (Elenio, 2012: 84-85). The missing intergenerational exchange also meant that they could be more flexible and select certain traditions and values and discard or be less strict with others that they did not consider crucial for the advancement of their children in the new country. Catholicism

581 seemed to be one of these, as evident in the words of two second-generation
 582 fathers, one in his early seventies, the other in his late forties:

583 We would have hoped that [our children] stayed and married traditionally with a
 584 Catholic, but we let them do what they wanted. We said two things: we will always
 585 love you no matter what you do, and to be the best you can be.
 586

587 I let my child be himself, he goes to a Catholic school, but I don't push the Catholic
 588 side, the exposure he gets at school is enough. The school was chosen because it
 589 was handy.
 590

591 Religion did not often come up among the three things or values my interviewees
 592 associated with Italy, yet 26 mentioned religion, church, or Catholicism during the
 593 interview. The fact that the remaining 24 did not refer to them does not mean they
 594 were not religious, as I saw many of them at Mass. Yet, none of them invoked
 595 religion when discussing gender roles, the upbringing of daughters, marriage and
 596 divorce.

597 Many parents talked of the need to adapt to the local mores and to strike a
 598 balance between Italian and New Zealand customs. The practice of children living at
 599 home until marriage appears to be fundamental for the continuation of the centrality
 600 of the family and Italian traditions. Yet, the practice has not given rise to *mammismo*.
 601 Mother-son relationships do not appear to override other family bonds (Giorgio,
 602 2015). This may be the result of combined factors: the need for first-generation
 603 women to contribute to the family income may have stopped them from investing
 604 their lives solely in children; the ever-increasing exposure of the younger generations
 605 to the influence of the dominant New Zealand culture; and the possibility that this
 606 particular diasporic community was not exposed to the consolidation of the maternal
 607 stereotype which, in D'Amelia's analysis, took place in Italy after the majority of its
 608 members migrated. All my interviewees valued their Italian heritage, which for them
 609 overwhelmingly meant to pass on to their own children love and respect for parents,
 610 children and family, love of food and ability to cook it, and knowledge of family in the

homeland. For the Māori-Italians this is even more of a project than for the Italians, paralleling their project of recovering their lost Māori inheritance.

Yet, Italian migrants in Wellington have benefitted from influences external to the community, which have ensured that they did not remain in a time warp and that they gave positive visibility to their Italian heritage within the nation, contributing to the modernisation of New Zealand and its transformation from a British colony to today's super-diverse, multicultural nation. Women's participation in the workforce and motherhood are major areas in which New Zealand Italians appear to have left their homeland behind.

We have seen how in today's Italy women are still expected to take primary responsibility for home and family. Although roles are still performed along traditional gender divisions also in New Zealand, Italian women at Island Bay do so with a much higher level of involvement and support from husbands and children of both sexes than their counterparts in Italy. National time-use surveys show that between 1998 and 2004 Italy still presented a higher decline in female employment at the time of union formation and the highest decrease in women's employment with the arrival of children than France, Sweden and the US (Anxo et al., 2011). Italian women also spend more hours in household activities than women in the same countries (even when they have domestic help), while Italian men's participation increases only with retirement (Anxo et al., 2011). Furthermore, a highly rigid labour market, alongside unprotected part-time and non-permanent precarious employment as a result of deregulation of part-time work in 2000 (Pacelli et al., 2013), means that Italian mothers either work full time or do not work at all (Anxo et al., 2011).

Part-time work has been advocated by the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective as the solution to the problem of female life-work balance, enabling Italian women to say a 'double yes' to career and motherhood (Libreria delle donne di Milano, 2008). This proposal has been criticised for ignoring the constraints of

female employment already mentioned, for assuming that the work of care is still primarily women's responsibility and for perpetuating gender inequalities within the family (Falcinelli & Magaraggia, 2013). Recent research on part-time work and on maternal identities among New Zealand women of European descent reveals similar assumptions.⁹ Despite the high increase in women's participation in labour and the increasing involvement of fathers in parenting, the 'intensive mother discourse' which constructs women as primary carers and men as breadwinners is still dominant (Kahu & Morgan, 2007). Yet, mothers in New Zealand are exposed to counterdiscourses, notably by liberal feminism and economic rationalism, which construct paid work as necessary for women's personal success, wellbeing and good citizenship and put pressure on them to go back to work (Kahu & Morgan, 2007). Recent government policies have been aimed at increasing women's participation in the workforce not only to address equality issues but also to increase productivity (Kahu & Morgan, 2007) and meet the challenges of global competitiveness (Curtin & Devere, 2006). One of these policies is the 2007 'right to request' legislation which allows anybody with caring responsibilities to apply for Flexible Working Arrangements. What interests us – independently of, for instance, uptake statistics for men and women, the ideological implications of the legislation, or whether the legislation grants mothers a real choice (Donnelly, Proctor-Thomson, & Plimmer, 2012) – is the fact that Italian mothers in New Zealand are a lot better off when it comes to work-life balance and work opportunities than their counterparts in Italy who are victims of high unemployment, lack of protective work legislation, poor public childcare and an ideology of work that values highly remaining in the same job for one's working life.

⁹ The studies discussed in this section do not distinguish between different European ethnicities.

A recent survey (Patterson & Forbes, 2012) on the imagined futures of 16/18 year-old New Zealanders shows that they espouse traditional gendered divisions of competencies and responsibilities when it comes to parenting, even while accepting women's participation in paid economic activity. They seem to have in mind the modernised male-breadwinner family model, with the males working full time throughout their lives and the females in occupations amenable to interruptions or reduced hours to fulfil the demands of mothering. The underlying belief is that care of young children is still best performed by mothers rather than by institutions and non-family. A similar survey in Italy would yield different results, with both sexes imagining their futures in stable and continuous employment (an impossible goal in the current economic climate), women rejecting traditional divisions of domestic labour, yet possibly also foreseeing having to take responsibility for the home, children and elderly parents.

There is strong academic (as well as anecdotal) evidence (Miller, 2004; Modena & Sabatini, 2012) that low fertility in Italy, as in other countries, is linked to women's unstable work status, namely women's work is not a deterrent to having children, but the opposite: couples delay having children until the woman is employed, both to ensure the family's economic well-being and to enable women to fulfil their professional aspirations after investing in education. Furthermore, the contribution of other family members to housework appears to determine whether a couple decides to have a second child (Miller, 2004). Thus, Italy has a low fertility rate because of women's lower participation in the workforce and a higher fertility rate among the better-educated, highly-skilled professional women who are in secure employment and can afford private childcare and domestic help (Pacelli et al., 2013). In sum, part-time work is currently not an option for Italian women aspiring to be mothers. It is instead a much more attractive option for New Zealand mothers, including those of Italian descent, some of whom avail themselves of it.

Where do we place the Wellington Italian community in terms of ideals and practices of mothering *vis-à-vis* women's work and career? We would need to collate a wide range of data to answer this question. Here we can only offer some speculative observations. It appears that my interviewees hold beliefs close to those of women in Italy concerning acceptability of married women's paid work, women's expectations of career and self-fulfilment beyond family and motherhood and, most likely, the aspiration to a good life in a comfortable owned home, namely what had prompted them or their parents and grandparents to move to New Zealand. In this, it seems that 'Italianness' has given them an edge over New Zealand women, who, as seen earlier, have more traditional aspirations. At the same time, contrary to what happens in the homeland, their desire and ability to become mothers are facilitated by the more favourable economic and labour situation and family-friendly public provisions in New Zealand. My interviewees of the younger generations did not report that motherhood had been or was an obstacle to their careers. On the basis of the preceding discussion, one could predict that a survey on the imagined future of young women of Italian descent in New Zealand would reveal that they imagine themselves as in full-time employment after graduating, as marrying, becoming mothers, continuing to work, perhaps reducing their hours, bringing up the children with their partners' support and later re-entering the labour market full-time to pursue their chosen career at the level they desire.¹⁰

It appears that the Italians of Island Bay have been able to change without renouncing their Italian beliefs and history. The possibility that earlier difficult communications with the homeland and scarce access to cultural representations of

¹⁰ The 2013 total fertility rates seem to support this imagined scenario. While in Italy the TFR is 1.39 child per woman, in New Zealand it is 1.92 for the ethnic group 'European or other' which subsumes the Italians. See http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_FECONDITA1&Lang=; http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/births/BirthsAndDeaths_HOTPYeDec13.aspx; and http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/births/births-tables.aspx (last accessed 25 March 2015).

Italian life due to distance may have meant that the view of motherhood that was constructed in Italy over the century of migration represented by my sample did not reach the Italians in New Zealand in a coherent and cumulative way. My interviews did not conjure up the phantasm of the oppressive Italian mother described in my Introduction. My interviewees expressed admiration and respect for mothers and grandmothers, but they neither idealised nor denigrated them. Among the older generations, there is indication that daughters understood how their mothers were enmeshed in contradictory expectations and recognised how hard migration had been for both their parents. In this, first-generation Italian women in Wellington were not different from Italian mothers in other diasporas, having to deal with different sets of beliefs, behaviours and expectations (Baldassar & Gabaccia, 2011). The daughters of post-World War II migrants found a more favourable environment outside the community which allowed them to formulate strategies on how to move between the two worlds they were living in and prepare the ground for their children and especially daughters to obtain what they could not, thus showing more agency than their counterparts in Italy and possibly more progressive ideals as mothers and career women than their New Zealand counterparts. The very young generations have less to negotiate with their parents, the Italian community and the larger society. Yet negotiations must still take place, as they continue in their stated project of passing on their Italianness to the next generation.

More ethnographic work must be done to tease out family dynamics between generations, fertility decisions, work ethics, women's ideals, their self-perceptions also as New Zealanders,¹¹ their interaction with the new wave of mobile, transnational Italians who are currently arriving in New Zealand and even with neighbouring communities (such as Australia), all factors which may impinge upon

¹¹ Planned publications will focus on New Zealand, Māori, and European identity constructions.

their performance of 'Italian' motherhood. This article has only scratched the surface, but it is a start.

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